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MAGIC OBSERVANCES IN THE HINDU EPIC.

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Various works in Hindu literature provide us with a storehouse of magical observances, from the time of Vedic Hymns onward. The Sūtras of one sort or another recognize and inculcate magical arts. But in epic literature, what is formally taught elsewhere is found in active operation. There is lacking, of course, any systematic treatment of these magical rites; they must be culled piecemeal from epic narration. Further, the relative importance of magical rites is lost, because to the heroes of the epic some magical observances were much more important than others. Finally, it must be said that at the time of the epic there was no sharp distinction felt between the regular sacrifice and the irregular magical sacrifice. All sacrifice was to win power, often from deities opposed to the sacrificer; but they were constrained to grant his wishes by the (magical) power of the rite. The same is true of the practice of austerities and ascetic observances, which, when persisted in, made the gods uneasy, because by means of such observances the ascetic won power over the gods themselves. Hence the religious devotion of a saint appalled the gods and they tempted him in various ways to fall from his asceticism, not because they disliked him or what he did, but merely as a means of self-defence.

On the other hand, magic *per se* was strictly divided into good and bad magic. The difference lay not in the rite itself so much as in the application of the rite. If one's adversary was a demon, who naturally employed magic, then a good man himself might use the same means. Injurious magic was justified against an injurer. All the gods as well as the demons use such magic and men may do as the gods do, but with the same restriction, that is, that their magic be Aryan or "noble," not for base purposes. Hence we are

told that when a king and his priest perform a magical ceremony involving murder they are sent to hell (see below).

A great deal of magical lore lies in the wonder stories of the holy watering-places called Tīrthas. We read that at such and such a Tīrtha the footprints of the gods are still visible, that “fishes of gold” are to be found, that animals change their shapes, etc. Primarily, the Tīrthas are in the interest of the accepted religious cult and the reward offered for a journey to a Tīrtha and a bath in the sacred pool is forgiveness of sins, 3.47.29, etc. But besides this the pilgrim gets “all his wishes” or more specifically “regains his youth,” or gets “beauty and fortune,” as in 3.82.43f., *ib.* 111f.; 85.32. That diseases are cured in the Tīrthas, 3.83.50f., may be due rather to a belief in medicinal waters and is not necessarily a magical trait. But it is a trifle more magical when we read that if one eats once at the Tīrtha called Maṇināga he will never thereafter be poisoned by snake-bites, 3.84.109f. In the same section it is said that the tracks of the magical cow Kapilā “and of her calf” are preserved till now at the Tīrtha named for her, *ib.* 88.

The Tīrtha is, in short, the place where marvels are to be seen, and these marvels are of more or less magical nature, like the “marvel visible even today at Pindāraka” (in Gujarat), viz., “impressions having the mark of the lotus and lotuses stamped with (Śiva’s) trident,” 3.82.66.

Like the Tīrthas, the trees and mountains show many magical touches, but these require separate treatment.¹

MAGIC IN SACRIFICE.

It must be assumed at the outset that all the paraphernalia of the Vedic cult, with its fire sacrifice, *havyam* and *kavyam*, 7.59.16, sacrificial sessions, “four-month” sacrifice, the “five sacrifices,” 5.134.12 (cf. 19); the “six *sādyaskas*,” the *sarvamedha*, the “seven *soma-samsthās*,” 12.24.7; 29.38, etc., were perfectly well known to the writers of the epic. Thus the horse-sacrifice and human sacrifice are referred to, *e. g.*, 5.29.18, and the countless

¹ Compare my forthcoming paper on “Mythological Aspects of Woods and Mountains in the Hindu Epic,” JAOS. 1910.

cattle sacrificed by the various kings who are extolled by the poets are the same as in earlier ages, only that the numbers (cf. *e. g.*, the *jārūthyas*, 3.291.70), like the gold employed, 7.61.6, etc., exceed all probability. These need not be described. Indeed the epic does not describe them. It merely mentions them, as it does the “divine and woodland rule” of performing *rājarṣiyajñas*, 3.240.16. Only in the case of the horse of victory and its subsequent sacrifice do we get a real picture of epic sacrifices of the old sort. It is rather the new features that are instructive, such as the actual presence, in sight of man, of the gods (at sacrifice), 7.67.19; the later insistence on make-believe sacrifices, seeds representing animals, etc., as in 12.338.4 due to the doctrine of non-injury, and the sacrifices not so orthodox as those just mentioned, which smack of magic, though even the regular sacrifices are performed as mere magical rites, by which, for example, India wins the lordship of gods, 12.20.11 (cf. 5.140.14, the girls’ pots and plants in sympathetic magic).

One of the most interesting of these is the human sacrifice described in 3.127.2f.; 128.5. Jantu was the only son of Somaka and his father feared that he would die and leave him childless. He therefore exhorted his domestic chaplain to devise some means by which he might secure more sons. The sinful means devised was the sacrifice of Jantu. The various wives of the king stood about the cauldron where the wretched child was being cooked and sniffed the steam and smoke. This evil sacrifice had two results. The child was reborn as the eldest of a hundred sons conceived by the wives in this process of sniffing; but on the other hand the wicked priest had to go to hell.²

That a domestic priest has occult power over the king is generally admitted. He is able “to sacrifice the strength of the king”

²The artificial “sacrifice” of life (5.141.29f.) in battle is taken seriously by the epic poets. Compare 5.58.12 (to Yama): Śiva “sacrificed himself in the *sarvayajña*, and so became god of gods,” 12.20.12. “In battle a warrior makes a sacrifice (as if making an oblation into fire, *hutvā*) of his body,” 3.300.36; so 12.24.27, etc., Śibi sacrificed himself, in a pretty tale, by cutting off his limbs to save a fugitive; but the demon Rāvana cut off his own heads and offered them in fire, which pleased Brahmā so that he let them grow again, 3.275.20.

or of the enemy, “on the sacrificial fire” *medhāgni*, that is, it is a magical fire-ceremony, 5.126.2; 9.41.12. In the horse-sacrifice, the head is cut off and set on the fire-altar, 7.143.71, that the chief part of the rivals may be destroyed. Even the demons fade away when the domestic priest of the gods “puts meat on the fire with a view to their abolition,” 9.41.30.

The sacrifice of a hundred conquered and captured kings to Siva (Rudra) intended by the victor, king Jarāsandha, calls forth the remark in 2.22.11 that “no one ever saw the slaughter of men”; but the entirely casual statement that “there is just as much merit in going to the holy well of Nandinī as there is in sacrificing human beings,” 3.84.155, seems to show (since the speaker’s object is merely to exploit this Tīrtha) that human sacrifice was regarded as something actual, and rarely beneficial. In 10.7.56 a man “sacrifices himself as an offering,” and being accepted by the god comes out alive with divine power.

Many of the sacrifices made by the epic heroes, however, are simple offerings of “words, water, and fruit,” 3.36.45; 41.47. Sacrifice is a means of purification: “By various sacrifices cleansing off the sin committed let us go to heaven” (*pāpam avadhūya*), 3.52.20. The usual sacrifices offered by those dwelling in the woods are *iṣṭi*, *pitṛyāṇi*, and *kriyās*, 3.25.3. A royal list may be illustrated by those offered by Yudhiṣṭhira, to wit, “*vāiśvadeva*, *iṣṭi*, *paśubandhu*, *kāmyanāīmittika*, *pākayajña*, *aśvamedha*, *rājasūya*, and *gosavas*,” 3.30.14f.³ There is also a quasi sacrifice of feeding a white bull till it can eat no more, by making offerings to it as to something sacred, *anaduhe sādhave sādhuvāhine . . . sāuhityadānāt* (to satiety), 3.35.34.

Only a king may offer a royal sacrifice, but there is another “just as good” (as efficacious) which an ambitious prince may offer. Its present interest lies in the fact that it is something quite new. “You cannot have the Rājasūya while the king lives,” says the priest to the ambitious prince, “but there is another great sacrificial

³In 7.68.10, *ukthyas*, *aśvamedha*, *agniṣṭoma*, *atirātra*, *viśvajit vājapeya*; *ib.* 66.7, *darśapūrṇamāsāu*, *āgrayaṇa*, *cāturmāsyas*, etc. Compare also 7.63.1 f. which adds *puṇḍarīkas*, and remarks that the king gave “all the property of those not Brahmans to the Brahmanas.”

session equal to the Rājasūya.” Out of the gold collected as tribute is made a golden plough and with it is ploughed the earth for the altar, *yajñavāṭasya bhūmih*, and a great ceremony called Vāiṣṇava, “very well prepared,” *susaṁskṛta*, is performed, rivalling the Rājasūya. No one except Viṣṇu ever performed this sacrifice, and the priest says it seems to him even better than the Rājasūya: *etena ne'sṭavān kaścid rte Viṣṇum purātanam, rājasūyam kratuśreṣṭham spardhaty esa mahākratuh; asmākam rocate cāi 'va śreyas ca tava*, etc., 3.255.13–21. This rite closes with scattering corn and anointing with sandal-paste; but “some said it was not equal to one sixteenth of the other” (the Rājasūya).⁴

SACRIFICE.

“Sacrifice arose in the eastern country,” says the epic, 5.108.5 and 9. This is more important as showing that the eastern country (district) was no longer as of old regarded as foreign.

Like other things, sacrifice is personified. The Great Father lives in the north with Sacrifice, 5.111.15. The Great Father, by the way, brings a sacrifice, as much as do the other gods, *iṣṭikṛtam nāma (satram varṣasahasrikam)*, 3.129.1.

“A sacrifice without gifts (to the priest) is dead,” is another saying of the epic, *mṛto yajñas tv adakṣinah*, 3.313.84. Cf. 5.106.22, etc.

The merit of a sacrifice pertains to the giver; but he may give that merit away to another, 5.122.13, etc.

Most of the gods sacrifice as they accept sacrifice. They are “perfectors of the sacrifice,” *sviṣṭakṛtah*, 5.42.40 (rare epithet of gods in general; usually of the Fire-god alone). The gods are established through sacrifices, and sacrifices are produced through

⁴This is a standing expression of depreciation, as in 3.34.22; 39.23; 174.3; 254.27; (above) 257.4; 4.39.14; 5.49.34; 7.36.7; 111.30 (31, *nālām Pārthasya!*); 7.197.17; 8.15.28. Compare 12.174.46 = 177.51 = 277.6. The fraction is scarcely used otherwise save in the late geographical section of Bhīṣma, where it is said that Kubera gives to man only one sixteenth of the quarter of Meru’s wealth, which (quarter) he in turn receives (from Śiva), 6.6.23. In 10.12.17, “one hundredth part” and in 12.155.6, “one eighteenth part” are used in the same way as one sixteenth. But “one and one-half times” (better) is found in 7.72.34 and 11.20.1.

the Vedas, 3.150.28. Gods who “steal the sacrifice” are begotten by Tapas, and are fifteen in number (3×5), one group having Mitra-names, 3.220.10f. (Subhīma, Atibhīma, Bhīma, Bhīmabala, Abala; Sumitra, Mitravat, °jña, °vardhana, °dharman; Surapravīra, Vīra, Sureśa, Suvarcas, Surahantar).⁵ A peculiar way of dotting earth with sacrifices is often alluded to in the epic. It is by casting a Śamī stick as far as it will go, and building an altar where it falls, over and over again, śamyākṣepēna (ayajat), 3.90.5, etc.

The general distinction made by the epic between the worship of gods and Manes is that the gods are honored with flowers and water and the Manes with roots and fruits, the former being *arcitāḥ*, revered, and the latter being *tarpitāḥ*, pleased, 3.156.6. Every sacrifice is identified with Prajāpati, as food, and the year, 3.200.38.

But besides the regular sacrifices and the substitutions for them⁶ there is evidence (cf. 8.40.33, the Mantra of the Atharva to offset scorpion poison) that the use of the “Atharva Veda crammed full of wizardry” was familiar enough. The application of the art of magic was according to circumstances. Against one who used bad magic the use of bad magic was permissible; otherwise not. The difference between good and bad (“straight and crooked”) magic was recognized and practiced both in the use of legitimate and illegitimate sacrifices and in the application of magic weapons and the like (magic clouds of dust, showers of blood, frightful shapes and noises) to defeat a foe. The Mantra sufficiently potent converted the ordinary weapon into a magical dart, a boomerang or thunderbolt, with which a good and true Aryan might fight the powers of darkness and any sinful knights who relied on such powers. Ethically, the rule was “magic is sinful; but if employed against the good the good may in turn use it.” The same rule, in short, as obtained in the matter of curses. If cursed not it was sinful to curse; if cursed, it was silly not to curse back and the worse the curse the better the curser. Cf. 12.100.5; 103.27f.

⁵ Foreign influence may be suspected in the Mitra-named “sacrifice-stealers.” The others are native devils, to whom one offers sacrifice “outside the altar.” The idea is Vedic. The last name in the text is paraphrased, *surāṇāmapi hantāram*, “slayer of gods.” Sureśa (Agni) is a proper enough name of a (good) god!

⁶ Compare also *ātharvana arivināśana*, “foe-slaying,” 8.90.4; *Kṛityā atharvāṅgrasi’vogṛā*, “like an Atharvan rite, horrible,” 8.91.48; 9.17.44.

The use of charmed weapons was facilitated by a special ceremony called Lohābhīsāra. Thus in 5.160.92, *lohābhīsāro nirvṛttah* means “That ceremony has been performed (for you) which forces the deities named by the Mantras you have used to preside over and govern your ordinary weapons.” So all the deities of water, fire, etc., have their names given to the weapons thus inspired, and when a warrior is said to use the *Vāruṇa astra* it is merely an arrow inspired by the god named, who is temporarily at the disposal of the knight. This is a perfect parallel to the “singing of a weapon” on the part of an Australian savage and the Mantra is felt as nothing more than a magic formula. It is equally efficacious when said over a blade of grass, 10.13.19f. In 8.40.7, an arrow is “preserved for years in sandal-dust and religiously worshipped,” *pūjītah*, that it may be effective when needed.¹

When Arjuna makes a lake spring up where there was no water, on the field of battle, he performs a similar magic trick, 7.99.62f., for it is done by piercing the earth with a magic arrow.

It must be observed that all these practices are in good repute if not exercised for a sinful purpose. The priest who knows magic is the king’s domestic chaplain. The king himself is a magical being when as in the case of king Śāntanu he has the “healing touch,” 1.95.46; “Whomsoever he touches with his hands, if worn out he becomes vigorous again.” Certain priests are Brahmins of high character and yet have the honorary distinction of being *vidyājambhakavārtikāḥ*, that is, “conversant with wizardry and magic” (cf. *ib. jambha-sādhakāḥ*), 5.64.16,20.

The ordinary means of resisting disease was threefold, drugs, Mantras (holy verses), and “ceremonies,” *kriyās*, as is succinctly expressed in the simile, “Karna attacked Yuddhiṣṭhira like a fearful disease which has passed Mantras, drugs, and *kriyās*,” 8.49.8. The *kriyā* is often identical with *māyā* (magic, illusion). In 9.24.54f.,

¹The weapon is treated like an idol. One such magic weapon is a dart made by the great Artificer (Tvaṣṭar). It is kept for years and worshipped, “with perfumes, garlands, a seat, drink and food”! 9.17.44. Two magical weapons are described in 8.53.24f. One of them encircles the foes’ legs with snakes and the other invokes birds of prey which eat the snakes (*pādabandha* or *nāga*, and *sāuparṇa*). When one’s fated day arrives, however, the magical weapon refuses to act, 7.191.8.

the hero solidifies a lake and lies within it hidden from his foes. This is *māyā* but also *dāivayoga*, “divine power,” *ib.* 30.56. The opposing hero is then exhorted to kill the fugitive by *māyā*, because “one who uses magic should be slain by magic,” 9.31.7. The divine adviser, Krṣṇa, then says “for by means of *kriyā* (*i. e.*, magical ceremony) the demons were killed by the gods. Thus Indra slew Bali (etc.). This fellow here has used his divine *māyā* to hide in the water (31.4) and so you should kill him by *kriyā*—means, just as Indra slew Vṛtra, and Rāma slew Rāvaṇa, and I myself of old slew the two ancient demons Tāraka and Vipracitti. So other demons were slain by *kriyā* and it is by *kriyā* that Indra enjoys heaven” (31.14). Here the “ceremony” *kriyā* is synonymous with *māyā*, illusive magic, even deceit, as clearly in 5.35.42 where it is said that the use of Atharva Veda formulas, *chandānsi*, “do not save one who uses *māyā*, but desert him,” as a sinner, parallel to one who drinks, quarrels, etc. Compare also 9.58.5f., where *māyā* is deception.

HAIR.

The idea that strength resides in the hair may be indicated by the ascription of very long thick hair to ogres (Rakṣasas). These creatures have hair as thick and long as an elephant’s trunk and a *trijaṭā* female, that is a female ogre with her hair in three braids, is especially fearful. Śiva himself bears the epithet *Trijāṭa*. On the other hand, the sign of defeat in battle is that one stands *patitamūrdhaja*, “his head-growth fallen,” that is, with loosened hair, as in 3.280.66.⁸ Suplicants have “loose hair,” 10.8.107, and ghosts are bald, *ib.* 71. The hair of the Yogi droops, 12.46.5, as his intelligence wanes.

The type of weakness, the eunuch, had his hair done up in a braid, *venīkṛtaśiras*, 4.2.27; that is, like a woman. The one braid was also a sign of mourning. In R.2.108.8, “The city wears but one braid” means that the whole city mourns. Dishevelled hair

⁸ The likeness to an elephant’s trunk is made to show strength. On the contrary, Sītā’s, the heroine’s, hair is “like a black snake,” being done up in a long braid (*kāli vyālīva mūrdhani*) *dirghavenī*, 3.281.25f. Hair-dressing *keśakarma*, was the occupation of a Sāirandhri, 4.3.18 (*jāti*), a special caste.

also indicates mourning (compare the funeral procession, when all the mourners go *pracṛttaśikhāḥ*, “with loosened braids,” AGS.4.2.9), that is, by analogy with the one-braid sign, weakness. It makes no difference for what one mourns, whether for the death of a loved relative, or the loss of a kingdom, or, it may be, for the loss of dignity. Thus in 5.40.15: “Men bring from the house the dead son and cast him on the pyre (‘fire-heap’) like a log, and weep with loosened hair; while another enjoys his wealth, and birds and fire enjoy the constituents of his body.” But also, in mourning for the kingdom they have gambled away: “The prince went on, covering his face with his garment, and one brother threw dust upon his limbs and another greased his face, and the women wept with dishevelled hair and covered their faces with their hair,” although the explanation given is that they did this in order not to be recognized, 2.80.4f. But, though this may be true of the grease and dust, in regard to the hair it is artificial, as may be seen from other accounts. Thus in 3.173.62f.: (when their men have been killed) “The women rushed out of the town with dishevelled hair, in excitement, distressed, like ospreys;⁹ and with dishevelled hair they fell on the ground, mourning for their sons, fathers, and brothers; weeping and wailing and beating their breasts; devoid of wreath and ornament.” Again, at 4.16.46, the insulted heroine “loosens her hair,” or, in the fuller description of the South Indian recension, 4.20.59 and 77: “She bathes not, she eats not, she wipes not off the dust. . . . All her limbs are covered with dust like those of a female elephant . . . and she has her hair loose”; and she does not braid her hair again till the insult is avenged after twelve years, *keśapāśasya padavīm gato’si*, 12.16.28.

As a sign of disgrace, a conquered foe has to proclaim in public, “I am the slave of the Pañḍus,” and wear his hair like an ascetic in five little tufts. His conqueror “with his crescent-shaped knife made five tufts.” He is then *pañca-sikha-* (SI. *pañca-saṭa-kṛtah*, 3.272.9 and 18. In 7.202.58 this designates Śiva (as ascetic).

⁹ So in 9.29.68f. “the women beat their heads with their nails and hands, wailing like ospreys, and tore their hair and beat their breasts, shrieking ‘alas, alas!’” “Covering the face with her garment” (in mourning) occurs in 9.63.68.

To be bald is to be disgraced anyway, and only hermits (*parivrajanti dānārtham mundāḥ kāśayvāsasah*, 12.18.32) and barbarians shave their heads. The hermit is *mundā* or *vikaca*, “shaved on the head,” 3.260.12 (of a Śivaite ascetic), and the poet, in describing the heads of the barbarians on the battle field, says that they had “beards but no hair on their heads,” which made them look like cocoanuts. Probably ethnic characteristics lie back of the “tufted hair” of Buddha and the standing epithets applied to Kṛṣṇa and to his chief disciple, Arjuna, who are called, respectively, Hṛṣikeśa and Guḍakeśa, *e. g.*, at the beginning of the Bhagavad Gītā 6.25.24. The obvious etymology would make the first “stiff-haired” and the second “ball-haired” (cf. *hr̥ṣita*, of hair standing on end; but native piety divides the word into *hr̥ṣika-iśa*, “lord of senses”). Hair with curly ends is praised. Kṛṣṇā, the heroine of the great epic, has blue-black hair with its own perfume and glow like that of a snake, “with twisted (curly) ends,” *vṛjināgrā*, 5.82.33.¹⁰

The squaws of some of our American Indians were accustomed to make a hair-parting through the middle of the crown and daub it with red paint, presumably to keep evil spirits out, as they used red paint for that purpose very generally. The same practice obtained in epic times (as it does today) among the ladies of India, though, like the squaws, they regarded it as merely ornamental to decorate themselves thus.¹¹

The casting of hair into the fire exhibits all the trait of a magical ceremony. In 3.136.9f., Rāibhya, a saint, cast into the fire two locks of his hair, and out of the fire came a woman and a male ogre, “with horrible eyes and terrible to see.” This male ogre then pursued the enemy of the saint; who could not escape

¹⁰ The signs of excellence in horses include (at 3.71.14) ten twists or curls called āvartas, which show good qualities. Compare Caland, *Over het Bijgeloof der Haarvervels op het paard*. In man, *tūbaraka* (hornless) “beardless” is equivalent to eunuch. “Bhima would kill anyone who should say to him ‘O thou *tūbaraka*’,” 8.69.73. “Curly red hair” characterizes the foreign van-guard of a model army, 12.101.16.

¹¹ Catlin says that no one knows why the Indians so decorate themselves, and he himself cannot think of any reason.

The middle parting was customary: *susamiyatāś cā 'pi jaṭā vibhatkā, dvāidhikṛtā bhāti lalāṭadeśe*, SI.3.113.9 (*viṣaktā. . nātisamā lalāṭe*, B.112.9).

into water, as the water dried up at his approach because he had become impure—another magical touch.¹²

Among the baths and sacred watering-places, there is one which goes by the name of Śvāvil-lomāpanayana in the Bombay text and Śvāna-lomāpanayana in the South Indian recension, at 3.83.63 (also -*lomāpaha*). This should mean the “removal of hair of porcupine” (or “of dog”), and the place probably commemorates some legend now lost; but the remark added to the name is “there (nowadays) priests pluck out their hair,” and “being thus purified attain the blessed state.” This is preceded by the mention of another watering-place, apparently near by (perhaps a rival Kurhaus), which “purifies merely by going to it; and one becomes purified (from sin) by drenching his hair in it” (the holy water). B. calls this Sītavana and the SI. text again differs slightly in making the name Sītavana. This last too is the reading in C. and it is probably correct as it has meaning (“the cool grove”), whereas the Bombay text is either meaningless or a corruption of “Sītā’s grove,” which is unlikely. In the description of the act leading to purification, *keśān abhyukṣya vāi tasmin pūto bhavati*, the “drenching of the hair of the head in this (water)” may imply casting the hair into the water, but that is not certain; while at the other watering-place the hair is certainly plucked out and (inferentially) sacrificed in the water.¹³ No religious force lies in “arrange thy hair” (in preparation for battle) in 9.32.60.

THE EVIL EYE.

The “eye of wisdom,” 3.209.50, etc., is a mental power. It is with a glance of the eye that Sagara’s sons are burned by Kapila,

¹² It is curious that this hair-born ogre does not disappear or perish when he has completed the task for which he has been created. On the contrary, he gets as his reward the woman created from the other lock of hair. Her part in the matter was to make the man impure through tempting him, which she easily did as she was very fair and he was not very virtuous.

¹³ Naturally, “grasping by the hair” is insulting (M. 4.83) and when the heroine of the epic is basely treated this only adds to the insult. There may, however, be a relic of superstition in it. At least Drona’s son feels more distress at the fact that his father’s foe “seized him by the hair” than on any other point in his manner of death, 7.195.8f., *kesagraha(ṇa)*. Proverbially “up to hair-seizing” means to the limit, as in R.3.46.2 (“I must strive”) “as hard as I can,” to the last.

according to one version of the story, as they were digging out ocean on earth's surface.¹⁴

That serpents have poison in their look may be inferred even from the common word for such poisonous reptiles, *āśīviṣa*, the black "poison-tooth" cobra, as compared with its synonym (*dṛgviṣa*), *dṛṣṭivīṣa* or *dṛṣṭīviṣa*, "poison glance," which, be it observed, is applied indifferently to snakes and to human beings (another word meaning "eye-poison," *netraviṣa* is used of the *āśīviṣa* serpent only, as "possessed of poison from the eye").

Many incidental remarks testify to the belief that a look may injure. Rāma's "mere look" killed the dragon-worm, 12.3.14. In 3.138.13, it is said; "Let not the one who slays a priest see thy sacrifice; by even a glance he could injure thee," *brahmahā preksitēnā'pi pīdayet tvām*. The inference here, that the evil eye is associated with an evil nature, is obvious; yet it does not follow that the injury to be done is voluntary. On the contrary the idea of envy, invidia, being at the root of the evil eye is probably not the primitive idea but a secondary notion. The evil eye works without its owner's will, though the will to cast the evil eye may on any occasion be present: "Beware lest the eyes of the weak consume thee" (they are compared with the eyes of a snake and a saint in power), 12.91.14f. Yet the action may be as effective without the wish to injure, and this is why the wedding-ceremony from the beginning associates *aghoracaksur apatighnī*, "(be) a wife without the evil eye, not a husband-slayer."

This word *ghora* is indeed in the epic associated with the "look of poison." In 5.16.26 it is said: "Never look thou upon Nahuṣā, who takes away energy; who has the poison-look; who is very terrible, *tejoharam dṛṣṭivīṣam sughoram*. In a following verse: "Let us overcome Nahuṣā who has the terrible glance, *ghoradṛṣṭim*, our enemy," 5.16.32. The two verses show that *dṛṣṭivīṣa* and *ghoradṛṣṭi* are practically synonymous.¹⁵

¹⁴ 3.47.9-19, *darśanād eva*. The account in 3.204.27 says that they were destroyed by fire which came from the mouth of Kapila.

¹⁵ The meter of the last verse is noticeable, *Ripum jayāma tam Nahuṣam ghoradṛṣṭim*. It should be added to the list given in my Great Epic, p. 299; also 5.29.16c: *tathā nakṣatrāṇi karmaṇād'mutra bhānti*, and the verse (not in B) C.797, *asatyām āpadi karmaṇi vartamānah*.

Nahuṣa himself says of his power: “Whatever living creature I look at with my eye, his energy I quickly take away; that is the power of my sight,” *dr̥ṣṭer balam mama*, 3.181.35. There is no implication that he wishes to do ill. The queen’s eye made a sore on her nephew’s finger; but with her look she might have consumed him, 9.63.65; 11.15.30.

The expression used in 3.151.6, “fruitful has my eye become,” that is my sight has been blessed (through seeing thee), *mamā ’pi saphalam cakṣuh*, is due rather to picturesque language than to any peculiar view of the eye.

MINOR MAGICAL TRAITS.

The reverence accorded to the *catuspathas* or places where two roads meet, making “four paths,” is probably due to the belief that evil spirits haunt such places, 6.192.58. To enter a place “Not by the door” is consonant only with evil designs, 2.21.53; 10.8.10.

Another relic of superstition due to magic is the aversion to leaping over another person. The feeling is so strong with savages that in some parts of the world houses are not built with two stories because of the avowed objection to the presence of another human person above the lower inmate of the dwelling. But in the epic the idea of the world-soul has blotted out this older view and the reason given for not leaping over another is explained by this later belief. Thus Bhīma refuses to vault over his brother Hanūmat, saying: “If I did not know that Being who has been manifested in all beings through tradition, *āgama*, I should vault thee, as Hanūmat did the sea; but as it is, I will not insult the Supreme Being (in thee) and will not leap over thee,” 3.147.8f.

Conception by sniffing or inhaling sacred fumes, of sacrifice, etc., is sometimes varied by smelling or tasting a brew prepared with Mantras (holy formulas), and sometimes combined with tree-marriages (q. v.). But a more purely magical touch is furnished by the ceremony alluded to in 4.3.12: “I know the bulls having good signs, by smelling the urine of which even a barren woman conceives.” Water alone may be doctored by a priest so as to have the same effect, 3.126.20. A god revives the dead with a

handful of water, 12.153.113 (SI.v.l.); though one may also be revived by divine fiat, or by a magical plant, 10.16.16.

Water-magic is inherent in a good many observances of the epic. Water dries up before a sinner, as in the case of the wicked priest who ran away and tried to escape through water, 3.136.9f. Water is a divine witness of wrong, 1.74.30. It is probably for this reason, as being also the most easily available witness of wrong, that in making a promise, an oath, or a curse (another form of promise), the one who promises or curses touches water. In the same way he may touch earth, as another divine witness. In the gift of a bride, not only "fire and hand-taking" but water are necessary, 7.55.15. So, in accepting a gift, one touches water, and hence "having wet hands" means having accepted a gift or bribe, 12.83.7, *ādrapāṇi*; cf. *klinnapāṇi*, "one who has had his hand wetted," i. e. been bribed, 12.139.30. An example of touching water in uttering a curse is furnished by 3.10.32, *vāry upasprśya*. In the same way when the young knight's armor is bound upon him, the veteran instructor "touches water and murmurs a Mantra," 7.94.39. Almost every solemn act, such as committing suicide, 3.251.19; or installing a commander of an army, 8.10.45, in the *abhiṣeka*, 48; or using a fire (divine) weapon, 7.201.15, is thus introduced by touching water. For example, in 7.79.1-3, when Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna go to bed, they both touch water, and whenever they speak or think of Śiva, from whom they hope to get a favor, they touch water, *ib.* 80.17 and 22; and a little further, *ib.* 81.12, on touching the snake which is the apparent form of the Pāśupata (magic) weapon of Śiva, water is touched. On the death of a relative or on touching the corpse one must bathe at once; hence in 8.94.30, "when Karṇa was killed in battle the sun which had touched his bleeding body sank swiftly as if to take a bath (of purification) in the western ocean." Specially prepared, medicated, water is given to kings, but this is perhaps regarded as really medicinal, *kaṣāya* and *sādhivāsa* (*jala*), 7.82.10, as in 12.332.32.

Water is however magical on occasions. In 3.289.9f., it is related that a Guhyaka came from the White Mountain at the command of Kubera, bringing with him "water by means of which

you shall see all invisible things," *anena mr̄ṣṭanayano bhūtāny antarhitāny uta bhavān drakṣyati*, and, it is added, "he to whom you shall give it," that is, if he uses it as an eye-wash, he too shall see the invisible.

It is difficult to decide whether the power of water rests in every case on magic or on the feeling that water "of which the world is made," 1.180.18, and which is one of the three "purities" ("purity of speech, of deed, and purity consisting in water," 3.200.82) is a natural purifier. Water touched by a priest purifies from sin, 3.193.36, and this is the secret of most of the Tirthas or sacred watering-places. They have been in contact before with some great saint or god and so won exceptional virtue.

But even plain water refreshes weary horses better if a Mantra (spell) has been said over it, 7.2.26.¹⁶

Water is especially associated with truth because truth is verbal purity. Consequently a very good man may walk over water or even drive his battle-car over water without sinking into it, as was the case with Pr̄thu Vāinya, 7.69.9 and with Dilipa, 7.61.9 and 10 (who was "a speaker of truth"). So too Yudhiṣṭhīra's car did not sink upon earth till he told a lie, an analogous case with the divine earth instead of water as witness. The perjurer is cast out by the water in ordeals (*passim*).¹⁷

MAGIC RITES WITH IMAGES.

The rite called *Chāyā-upasevana*, "shadow-cult," is explained by the commentator to be the well-known practice of sticking thorns or needles into the clay (wax) image of an enemy and thus inflicting pain or death upon the object of dislike. It is a clear case of "sympathetic magic." The commentor says it is explained in the

¹⁶ Bathing "in different waters" at the end of a battle is of doubtful bearing; the water may be medicated, 6.86.54.

¹⁷ Defilement of the water leads to the divine water's rejection of the sinner. So in Manu and other law-books. The defilement of water by casting into it excreta, saliva, etc., leads to the sinner's going to undesirable worlds, 7.73.31f. It is the fear of defiled water which causes the prohibition against living "in a village which has its water from only one well," 7.73.40. The crematory fire, when a corpse is burned, is extinguished with water, 8.20.50 (to keep off evil spirits).

Kāulika-Śāstra, 3.32.4. The South Indian recension has for this word a varied reading, the verse as there given being *ā mātrstanya-pānāc ca yāvac chayyopasarpāṇam* for the reading in B: *yāvad gostanapānāc ca yāvac chāyopasevanāt (janatavah karmaṇā vṛttim āpnuvanti)*. The adoration of the image of a teacher who has become estranged from his pupil is made in the hope that the image itself will act as the teacher, relent and give the desired instruction, and such proves to be the result in the one recorded epic case of Ekalavya who “made a teacher of earth, *mahiṁaya*, and by cultivating it with the adoration due to a (real) teacher attained, through faith and devotion, to great skill in weapons” (which he sought by worshipping the earthen image), 1.132.33.

AUTHORITY FOR MAGICAL OBSERVANCES.

Apart from the magical practices mentioned above there is little which can be classed as magic in the Great Epic. Ceremonies to raise spirits are known and the use of a jewel, “which, when bound upon one, preserves from danger of all sorts” (weapons, sickness, hunger, gods, demons, serpents, etc.) is recognized, 10.15.29. But there is no essential difference between Mantras to make demons serve one and Mantras to control the gods, except that the latter are employed without ceremony by a woman and the former by a priest with the full paraphernalia of sacrificial ritual, *karma vāitānasambhavam*, 3.251.23 and 305.20. In both cases the rite is according to the Atharva Veda, as declared by Br̥haspati and Uśanas, the teachers, respectively, of the gods and demons, that is, this Veda is the authority in all magical observances.

Of these two, it is the gods’ teacher who has most to do with the magical practices recognized in the epic, which, so to speak, sets the seal of orthodoxy on the cult. From the epic texts hitherto known we may gather considerable information in regard to him. Br̥haspati was the son of Aṅgiras, and the younger brother of Utathya; also the husband of Tārakā, and the brother of “that excellent lady who was the wife of Prabhāsa and the mother of the gods’ great Artificer.” He is reckoned among the Adityas and is identified with the fire-god, though he is also called a divine seer. His

knowledge in respect of raising the dead is inferior to that of Uśanas; but otherwise he seems to be more important than his rival. But the epic is too catholic to contrast the fourth Veda (of Br̥haspati) with the others to their disadvantage except in one passage not hitherto known.

This passage is of great importance not only in what it says but in showing how the epic was composed. It is found only in the so-called Southern recension, and like most of the long interpolations in that recension is a late addition to the epic.¹

In still another passage of this recension Br̥haspati is represented as inculcating such extreme liberality as to say that a good Mleccha (barbarian) is better than a sinful Brahman; but in this particular addition he declaims against the other Vedas, which are all inferior to the Atharva as aids to the king. For the office of Purohit, king's priest, only an Atharvan priest should be chosen. The other Vedas have nothing to do with "pacificatory, auspicious, and evil-averting matters." These Vedas were "cursed by Yājñavalkya." Moreover: "The priest of the Rig-Veda is destructive to the realm; the Sāma-Veda priest is destructive to the king; and the Vājasaneyaka is destructive to the army." Here *abhicarāṇa* or sorcery is expressly mentioned as one of the objects to which the king's priest devotes himself. This passage, interpolated, together with an extract from Uśanas, into the seventy-third chapter of the twelfth book (thirty-seven verses between B.2a-b and c-d), goes far beyond the general rule of the epic, such as is given in 12.165.22, "Let one skilled in the Vāitāna be the *hotṛ*." It mentions eighteen kinds of pacificatory ceremonies and calls the Yajurveda priest the Vājin and Caraka, giving the preference to the former as the holder of the office of king's priest. After them are admissible the Rig-Veda and Sāma-Veda priests (as Purohits), provided they are duly conversant with the Atharva-Veda. All this means that the priest of the spell (*brahma*) must be preferred to all other priests for the ceremonies of magic and that the especial patron of this priest is the great "lord of the spell," Br̥haspati, whose Veda is authoritative.

¹ On this point see a special article by the writer soon to be published on the Southern recension. The recension is a strong witness against the theory that the epic was composed "in one stream."